

## IDB Japan Special Fund grants US\$750,000 to CARPHA to fight COVID-19

15<sup>th</sup> May 2020

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has approved a US\$750,000 (TT\$5.1 million) grant to support the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) in the coordination of the regional health response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The grant is being financed by the IDB Japan Special Fund which was first established in 1988 by the Government of Japan to foster social and economic growth throughout the IDB's borrowing member countries. As of April 2020, Japan has already committed more than US\$230 million to this fund.

“Coordination is of utmost importance in this fight against the spread of COVID-19 and CARPHA continues to play a critical role in keeping with their intergovernmental mandate from CARICOM ,” said His Excellency Tatsuo Hirayama, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. “What is a threat to one country in the Caribbean is a threat to all.”

The grant will support CARPHA to work with Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago to enhance their COVID-19 detection abilities, mobilize surge response capacity and strengthen real-time disease surveillance and response. This will be done over the next two years and a portion of the grant will also be directed at strengthening CARPHA's laboratory capacity to meet the additional COVID-19 specimen-testing demands from their 26 member states. These interventions will translate into CARPHA maintaining efficient turn-around times for sample testing on a 24/7 basis, the establishment and training of rapid response teams, expansion of their Regional Tourism and Travelers Health Program , creation of a Caribbean travel health app and strengthening human resource capacity.

“COVID-19 has upended countries across the world, many lives have unfortunately been lost already and the pandemic is significantly challenging Caribbean economies ,” said Rocío Medina-Bolívar, IDB Group Country Representative for Trinidad and Tobago. “This grant is directly aligned with the IDB Group's COVID-19 response and is one of many measures we have taken to support Governments and safeguard citizens across our borrowing member countries in the Caribbean.”

As it relates to responding to the health priorities of the Caribbean, the IDB has worked with CARPHA in the past and most recently supported the expansion of CARPHA's regional tourism health information, surveillance and monitoring and response system. Similarly to that intervention, the IDB team on the ground in Trinidad and Tobago will work closely with CARPHA to execute the different components of this grant which will further strengthen the Caribbean's regional health response to the pandemic.